DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 025 691 AC 003 126

By-Griffith, William S.

Adult Education: The Challenge to the Junior College.

Pub Date 25 Oct 68

Note-13p.; Address presented at the Third Annual Illinois Junior College Conference, Rockford, Illinois, October 25, 1968.

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.75

Descriptors-Administrator Qualifications, *Adult Education, *Community Colleges, *Community Service Programs, Educational Change, *Junior Colleges, *Program Development

The increasing number of community junior colleges and the changing adult characteristics contribute to the expansion of the size and scope of junior college adult education. Forces which tend to restrict this development to conventional classroom programs are the definition of adult education as a community service inferior to transfer and terminal programs, the lack of imagination shown in adult classes, the ill-conceived state reimbursement schemes, the lack of cooperation with adult educators in other institutions, and the lack of training for administrators. Five action steps are proposed: (1) distinguishing between educational activities and community service programs; (2) strengthening existing agencies of adult education in the community and providing information on available programs; (3) providing unique courses which draw on the special resources of the junior college; (4) assessing community problems and developing programs to meet them, and (5) involving administrators in continuing education. (pt)

ED025691

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

# ADULT EDUCATION: THE CHALLENGE TO THE JUNIOR COLLEGE[1]

William S. Griffith
Department of Education
The University of Chicago

The community junior college is the most rapidly proliferating institutional form in American higher adult education. From 1967 to 1968 the total number increased from 912 to 975, and an additional 200 are in an early stage of development.[2] Although currently there are no statistics available to show the extent of adult education activity in these institutions, several surveys suggest that community service including adult education is a rapidly growing aspect of community junior colleges.

Two trends favor the development of community college adult education: first, the steady increase in the number of community colleges; and second, the increase in the number of adults having the characteristics of adult education participants.

Currently one new junior college is established each week. "If the rest of the nation provides junior college services on the scale now achieved by states like California and Florida, there will be more than 850 public community colleges by 1970 as compared with just over 500 in 1965."[3] This estimate appears to be conservative.

---

[1]An address presented at the Third Annual Illinois Junior College Conference, Rockford, Illinois, October 25, 1968.

[2]Telephone conversation with William S. Shannon, Associate Executive Director, American Association of Junior Colleges, August 26, 1968.

[3]Edmund J. Gleazer, Jr., ed. American Junior Colleges, 7th ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1967), p. 32.

The number of adults who will be coming to various institutions to pursue educational goals is increasing at a more rapid rate than is the population. Today the typical adult education participant is young, urban, and fairly well educated. In the next few decades the number of persons having these characteristics will increase at a more rapid rate than will the population as a whole. During the next twenty years the total population will increase by about 33 per cent while the number of adults under thirty-five years of age will increase nearly 70 per cent.[1] Within twenty years the population will contain as many as 64 per cent more adults who have been to college, 59 per cent more who have attended high school, and 15 per cent fewer with only a grade school education.[2]

The place of the junior college in adult education will also be influenced by the clientele it seeks to serve. For the most part adult educators have not been as successful in working with adults from lower socioeconomic levels as they have been in working with middle class clientele. Participation studies indicate that different groups in our society exhibit different levels of interest in learning opportunities. Persons in the lower socioeconomic groups apparently have as much or more spare time as persons in the higher socioeconomic levels. Yet, those who are in the lower groups do not characteristically turn to education as a way of using their spare time. It seems that the group which may expect to gain the greatest increase in leisure time due to automation is the group which has been least interested in adult education and which has the fewest resources for using the increased leisure constructively.[3] If community college adult educators should prove to be more successful

---

[1] John W. C. Johnstone and Ramon J. Rivera, Volunteers for Learning: A Study of the Educational Pursuits of American Adults (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1965), p. 19.

[2] Ibid., p. 20.

[3] Ibid., p. 22.

in working with persons in the lower socioeconomic classes than adult educators typically have been, the importance of the community junior college in adult education will be even greater than projections based on past participation rates would indicate.

But not all forces are working together to support the continuing expansion of community junior colleges into adult education. Several forces will tend to oppose the development, and these must be considered in an analysis of the challenges which face the adult educator in the community college.

## Forces Opposing Adult Education in Community Colleges

The words "adult education" mean different things to different people and it appears that the writers who have had something to say about adult education in the community college have an extremely restricted view. In one of the landmarks of the literature on the junior college, The Junior College: Progress and Prospect, less than 5 per cent of the pages are devoted to either community services or adult education. Medsker regards community service as a broad term which encompasses "the various special services which an educational institution may provide for its community. Examples of such services are workshops, forums and institutes; research and advisory assistance to community groups; cultural and recreational activities, including community music and theater groups; and widespread use of the college plant for community activities.". . .[1] Adult education in his view is evidently one type of community service consisting of nothing more than credit or noncredit classes offered for other than the regular full-time students.[2]

---

[1]Leland L. Medsker, The Junior College: Progress and Prospect (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1960), p. 78.

[2]Ibid., p. 73.

For the purposes of this paper the term adult education will be regarded as "a relationship between an educational agent and a learner in which the agent selects, arranges, and continuously directs a sequence of progressive tasks that provide systematic experiences to achieve learning for those whose participation in such activities is subsidiary and supplemental to a primary productive role in society."[1]

The essential distinction between community service and adult education is that in an educational activity the goal is a change in the knowledge, skill, or attitude of one or more learners. In a service activity an agent makes his skill available, much as a TV repair man, without making any pretense that he is trying to teach anybody anything. To the extent that an institution has education as its central function, service activities occupy a secondary position.

The narrow view of adult education which appears in the junior college literature evidently springs from the prevailing tendency of educators in the public school system to equate education with conventional classroom instruction. To the extent that the restricted definition of the word is used, those who are responsible for developing adult education programs will cover the entire range--from A to B. The state of adult education in the junior college reflects the relative newness of this function.

Adult education is one of the newer functions of the junior college and as such is less well understood than the transfer function which dominated the interests of junior college leaders for the first quarter of this century and which may still be seen as the only academically respectable function by some faculty members. For the second quarter of the Twentieth Century terminal education came to the attention

---

[1]Coolie Verner, "Definition of Terms," Adult Education eds. Gale Jensen, A. A. Liveright, and Wilbur Hallenbeck ([Washington, D.C.], Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., 1964), p. 32.

of an increasing number of junior college administrators. For the most part, however, the terminal function is still second in importance to the transfer function. Since World War II adult education and community service have been emerging. Accordingly, many of the problems associated with the indefinite place of adult education within the institution may be attributed to the youthfulness of the program compared to the terminal and transfer programs.

It should be noted that the restrictive definition of adult education was not endorsed or imposed by the Illinois State Legislature on the junior colleges of Illinois. In its wisdom, the Legislature simply endorsed "adult education" and left the job of defining it to those who write the legislative guidelines and serve on the Illinois Junior College Board. Despite the reluctance of the legislators to adopt a restrictive definition of adult education, if junior colleges reflect public school outlooks, the tendency to equate classroom instruction with adult education will persist.

A second reason the narrow definition of adult education will tend to persist is that little imagination or educational leadership is required to offer an "extended day" program. It is not very difficult to offer the same courses at night as are offered during the day, but it is not very innovative to call these classes held after 5:00 P.M. "adult education." The narrow definition will tend to persist, then, because it is the path of least resistance and it provides a convenient way of avoiding accepting any responsibility for educational leadership in the college and the community.

A third factor which tends to restrict the fullest development of junior college adult education programs is ill-conceived state reimbursement schemes. In some circumstances it is possible to get more money from the state if a course is offered under the sponsorship of a junior college than if the same course were taught in identical fashion to the same students by the same teacher under

high school sponsorship. Citizens might well question the wisdom of officials who promulgate such regulations. State subsidization which favors the movement of a course from a high school adult education program to a junior college adult education program may not be in the public interest.

One might also want to take a hard look at the practice of designating a high school as an extension center of a junior college where it appears that all of the junior college adult education program is conducted in high schools *and where it appears that the program in the cooperating high schools has not changed appreciably following the affiliation.* Tax supported financial incentives for moving existing courses from high schools into junior colleges will tend to retard the development of community adult education opportunities both by discouraging the public school adult education administrator and by tying up the junior college resources in efforts that might better be engaged in developing new programs for unmet needs. Professional adult educators and junior college administrators who are interested in the development of comprehensive community adult education must keep a close watch on legislation relevant to the junior college and also on the administration of the legislation if they want to insure that state support programs support rather than hinder that development.

A fourth factor which will militate against the fullest development of junior college adult education is the provincialism of some adult educators in other institutions. Presumably the most comprehensive program of adult education in each community would be facilitated by the discussion among educators in relevant institutions of the ways in which they can cooperate. At the present time the responses of the established associations in adult education to the emerging junior college adult education role are about as thoughtful and disciplined as the demonstrations and the police behavior in Chicago during the Democratic Convention. The major organizations--the Adult Education Association of the U.S.A.,

the National Association for Public School Adult Education, the National University Extension Association, and the Association of University Evening Colleges are all jockeying for position to see who can enlist the largest number of junior colleges or junior college adult educators as members. On the local level adult educators in established programs typically carry out their responsibilities giving little thought to the coordination of activities or to the problems of the total community as a client. Even where adult education councils exist they seldom engage in cooperative program planning. The extent of their efforts is frequently limited to the sharing of information concerning program decisions made at the individual institutional level.

The fifth limitation to the fullest development of junior college adult education to be discussed in this paper is the background and experience of junior college adult education administrators. A study of 394 public junior colleges in 1963[1] reported there were 127 adult education administrators in these institutions and that 73.8 per cent of them were employed full time. The directors had come from various positions: 10.3 per cent had been hired from other junior colleges; 31.0 per cent had come directly from elementary or secondary schools; 11.1 per cent had come from senior colleges and universities; and 41.2 per cent had come from other positions in the junior college in which they were employed at the time of the study. At some point in their careers 42.0 per cent of the directors had worked in primary or secondary schools. A majority of the directors had masters degrees (73.8 per cent); 21.4 per cent had doctorates; and 4.8 per cent had bachelors degrees. More than half of the directors, 55.5 per cent, had had administrative

---

[1] Wayne L. Schroeder and Dunnovan L. Sapienza, "The Public Junior College Adult Education Administrator," Adult Education, XV, No. 4 (Summer, 1965), pp. 241-245.

experience in their previous positions. Virtually none of the directors had come to his position with academic preparation in adult education.

Adult education in the junior college has typically erupted rather than evolved. It is not unusual that directors have been recruited from a variety of backgrounds. The influence of the public schools in shaping the directors' perception of adult education as conventional classroom teaching is reflected in the literature on junior college adult education.

Harlacher, President of Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, New Jersey, studied the community service and adult education programs of junior colleges for the American Association of Junior Colleges. Much of what he chose to call community service would be called adult education by professors of adult education. In November, 1967, he recommended that the Association support leadership training programs for community services personnel; encourage leading universities to establish leadership training programs for community services personnel; host a national conference on community services; and encourage regional and state-wide workshops and institutes on community services.[1] The argument posed by this report appears to be that the fullest development of adult education in the junior college will require pre-service and in-service education for the adult education administrators and continuing learning opportunities regarding adult education for university administrators and trustees in workshops and institutes.

The challenge to the junior college adult education program arises primarily from the five factors which have been presented. Five action steps may be suggested.

---

[1] Ervin L. Harlacher, The Community Dimension of the Community College, Report to the American Association of Junior Colleges (Oakland, Michigan: Oakland Community College, November, 1967), pp. 178-179.

## Approaches to Improving Adult Education in Community Colleges

The first of the five steps to be taken in meeting the challenge of adult education in the junior college is the initiation of action to counteract the forces which are tending toward a premature crystallization of the image of junior college adult education. As has been shown, the prevailing practice seems to be that of regarding adult education as consisting of only those programs involving classroom teaching. If adult education is to consist of a comprehensive community oriented program, then chief administrators and governing board members will require information to assist them in conceptualizing junior college adult education. One of the distinctions to be emphasized is between adult education activities designed to increase the knowledge, skills, and understanding of adults, and community service activities in which no learning need take place on the part of the participants.

The second step to be taken by the junior college adult educator is that of strengthening all of the existing agencies of adult education in his community. To date attempts to develop effective adult education councils or other coordinating organizations have usually been unsuccessful. Accordingly any coordination or cooperation among adult educators in different institutions serving the same area is likely to be haphazard and unsystematic. Typically, persons who have found themselves unexpectedly named as adult educators have attempted to start a program or to perpetuate an existing program without making a serious effort to assess the existing adult education opportunities in their communities. In most American communities there is no agency or office an adult can go to to obtain information on educational programs for adults being conducted in that community. Although each adult program administrator is interested in bringing his program to the attention of potential students it is rare for adult educators as a group to cooperate in establishing an information center designed to serve the public needs from the

standpoint of the individual adult seeking learning resources.

Because the provision of information to the adults in the community regarding learning opportunities is a function which is characteristically handled poorly if at all, the junior college adult educator has an opportunity to provide this service and in so doing earn the appreciation of adult educators in all institutions and of adults who use the service. The establishment of an adult learning opportunities clearinghouse by an administrator of a junior college program will work to his advantage in several ways. First, he will gain favorable public recognition for his providing the service. Second, he will become acquainted with all of the adult educators working in his area as he travels around meeting them and collecting information on their programs. Third, he will increase his knowledge of the work of each agency and its potential and therefore will become better able to plan a program which is addressed to unmet educational needs in the community. The community junior college adult educator who seeks to facilitate the development of a comprehensive community oriented adult education program will find that he is accepting a role which adult educators in other institutions have abdicated. He will have to show a new way to those who have worked in adult education longer than he has. He will have to surmount the tendency to regard community needs from the standpoint of what would be in the immediate best interests of his institution. He will have to exemplify a high standard of professionalism so that other adult educators may be persuaded of the merit of his approach and thus be induced to emulate his behavior.

The third step to be taken is that of building a program which does not unnecessarily duplicate existing offerings of other institutions and one which builds upon the unique resources of the junior college. Fisher emphasized that "the nature of the adult education program depends largely on the needs of the community and the nature of programs offered by other institutions in the community. In many areas, the

public school board operates a night school providing high school courses and a wide range of general interest courses. *In such cases there is no need for the junior college to duplicate the offerings and it can concentrate on higher level courses."*[1]

If he is to build a community educational program which draws upon the unique resources of his institution then an adult educator must become familiar with the special abilities of the staff of his institution. Only to the extent that he is aware of his resources can he determine the capability of the junior college to provide learning opportunities which are relevant to community needs.

In the fourth step the junior college adult educator approaches the community in a special way. Rather than thinking exclusively in terms of offering opportunities for each individual to get assistance in working toward his own personal goals, the community oriented adult educator will not deny his responsibility to exercise educational leadership. He will make his own assessment of community problems, and working with an advisory committee wherever possible, he will develop educational programs which will increase the capacity of the individuals involved to deal with the problem situation more adequately than they could have done otherwise. Although the community oriented adult education director is concerned with helping adults work toward the attainment of their socially acceptable goals, he is not content to stop at that point. Instead, he may develop programs to bring problems to the attention of people who were previously unaware of them. His concern is primarily with influencing the quality of life in the community through improving the ability of individuals and groups to participate intelligently in the decision-making processes of the community.

---

[1] Grant L. Fisher, Major Issues in Community College Organization (Calgary: Department of Educational Administration, The University of Calgary, 1967), pp. 63-64.

In the fifth step to be taken in meeting the adult education challenge to the junior college, the administrator directs his attention consciously and deliberately to his own continuing adult education. Through a systematic program of reading; professional memberships; attendance at selected local, state and national meetings; participation in workshops; and through pursuing graduate study in adult education; the professional adult educator in the junior college will remain abreast of new developments in the field not only in junior colleges but in all kinds of adult education institutions. A man who is not serious about his own continuing education is incompetent to provide effective leadership in junior college adult education.

## Concluding Statement

In this paper it has been shown that the increasing number of community junior colleges and the changing characteristics of the adult population constitute a situation which is conducive to the expansion of the size and scope of junior college adult education. Five forces were identified, however, which will tend to restrict junior college adult education activity to conventional, pedestrian, classroom-oriented programs. The junior college adult education administrator is the key person in determining whether the favorable forces will be utilized and the unfavorable forces neutralized or overcome. Five action steps were proposed for junior college adult educators who are eager to meet the challenge of developing a fully comprehensive community-based program of adult education.

Leadership is not conferred--it must be earned. The junior college adult educator who has developed a well-thought out plan of community oriented education and who can demonstrate the soundness of that plan to the officers of his institution, to his counterparts in other institutions offering adult education,

and to the public he seeks to serve will find that the mantle of leadership will be placed on his shoulders. The challenge to junior college adult education is clear. What is needed now are the men who have the vision and are ready to lead the way.

ERIC Clearinghouse
NOV 26 1968
on Adult Education